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Foundations in California Seen Taking More Active Role in Health Policy

Not-for-profit foundations and think tanks in California are taking more active roles in health care policymaking efforts, the *Los Angeles Times* reports.

In the past, these not-for-profits have stayed away from politics, the *Times* reports. The IRS bans these groups from lobbying or participating in partisan politics.

Some of the largest health care-focused foundations in California have opened offices in Sacramento and staffed them with seasoned former advisers of lawmakers, according to the *Times*.

For example, in November 2008, the California Endowment, a Los Angeles-based foundation announced that it was hiring Daniel Zingale, a former senior adviser to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R).

In addition, the California HealthCare Foundation has opened an office in Sacramento and hired a former legislative health expert to ensure that CHCF's research agenda is relevant to issues under consideration in the legislature.

Criticism

Sally Pipes -- president of the Pacific Research Institute, a San Francisco-based think tank that favors market approaches to health care -- said foundations face the risk of undermining their credibility when they participate in policy discussions.

Pipes said that she thinks "they will be really tarred as lobbyists."

According to the *Times*, foundation leaders stress that they have no interest in direct lobbying and that they promote ideas that are based on evidence as opposed to ideology (Rau, *Los Angeles Times*, 1/5).

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